

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 SAB-02 IO-13 AID-05 /076 W
-----250045Z 024176 /73

R 241430Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDE 6122
INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMCONSUL BELIZE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE GUATEMALA 3227

E.O. 11652 NA
TAGS: PFOR, GT, PN, BY
SUBJ: LAUGERUD IMPUGNS TORRIJOS'S INTEGRITY BUT REAFFIRMS GOG
SUPPORT FOR PANAMA ON CANAL

REF: 76 GUATEMALA 8413

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT LAUGERUD FOLLOWED UP HIS SUSPENSION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH PANAMA WITH A SHARP PERSONAL ATTACK AGAINST TORRIJOS AND ACCUSED HIM OF BEING A "BRIDGE" FOR CUBAN INTERFERENCE IN BELIZE. RESUMPTION OF GUATEMALAN-PANAMANIAN RELATIONS NOW APPEARS OUT OF THE QUESTION DURING THE LAUGERUD ADMINISTRATION AND PERHAPS FOR SOME TIME THEREAFTER. HOWEVER, GOG HAS APPARENTLY DECIDED THAT ITS GRIEVANCE IS AGAINST TORRIJOS AND NOT PANAMA AND THEREFORE IT HAS RETURNED TO ITS PREVIOUS STANCE OF SUPPORT FOR PANAMA'S POSITION ON THE CANAL. END SUMMARY.

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2. ON MAY 20, DAY FOLLOWING THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT GUATEMALA WAS BREAKING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH PANAMA, PRESIDENT LAUGERUD REPLIED TO A PRESS QUESTION WITH A STINGING ATTACK ON PANAMA'S TORRIJOS. HIS REMARKS WERE CARRIED VERBATIM IN THE MAY 21 MORNING DAILY NACION. LAUGERUD SAID IN PART, "I WOULD LIKE TO BE VERY CLEAR SO THAT THE WORDS OF THE PRESIDENT OF GUATEMALA CANNOT BE MISINTERPRETED,

... WITHOUT USING THE SLANDERS AND LIES THAT GENERAL TORRIJOS USED. FIRSTLY, I WANT TO MAKE CLEAR THAT THE PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT OF GUATEMALA WILL CONTINUE TO BE FRIENDS OF THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE, BUT NEVER OF GENERAL TORRIJOS."

3. LAUGERUD THEN REVIEWED THE TWO OCCASIONS (VENEZUELA 1974 AND GUATEMALA 1975) WHEN TORRIJOS SUPPORTED IN WRITING GUATEMALA'S POSITION ON BELIZE. "ON BOTH OCCASIONS GENERAL TORRIJOS WITH HIS SIGNATURE ASSUMED AN OBLIGATION OF HONOR; AND THE MAN THAT DOES NOT RESPECT HIS SIGNATURE ... DOES NOT HAVE ANY HONOR BECAUSE HE HAS NOT HONORED HIS COMMITMENT. SECONDLY, AT THE UNITED NATIONS GUATEMALA'S GREATEST SURPRISE WAS THE STAB IN THE BACK WHICH GENERAL TORRIJOS, NOT THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE, APPLIED ... HE DID NOT EVEN HAVE THE CIVILITY OR GOOD GRACE TO ANSWER (FON MIN MOLINA'S INQUIRY RE PANAMA'S POSITION). ... "WE MUST TAKE NOTE OF ONE OTHER THING. TORRIJOS ESTABLISHED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH CUBA AND NOW HE WANTS TO PRESENT HIMSELF TO US AS A NEW FIDEL CASTRO. DOES HE CONSIDER HIMSELF SO IMPORTANT AND SO GREAT THAT, LIKE CASTRO WHO SENT TROOPS TO ANGOLA AND OTHER PLACES, HE IS INTERVENING IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF OTHER COUNTRIES?"

4. "TORRIJOS CERTAINLY HAS STUCK HIS HANDS IN BELIZE IN PRIVATE BUSINESSES, BECAUSE IT IS NOT UNKNOWN TO THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE THAT HE IS INVOLVED IN A SERIES OF BUSINESSES. ON THE ONE HAND THIS MEANS HE BETRAYS A COUNTRY LIKE GUATEMALA FOR HIS OWN PRIVATE INTERESTS. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SECOND, YOU KNOW THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF BELIZE SOUGHT A LOAN FROM THE CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT BANK TO CONSTRUCT A NEW PORT AT BELIZE; THEY GAVE THEM, IF I AM NOT MISTAKEN, \$11 MILLION AND TORRIJOS OFFERED TO FINANCE THE OTHER \$9 MILLION. WHERE DOES TORRIJOS GET \$9 MILLION WHICH PANAMA DOES NOT EVEN HAVE FOR ITS OWN PEOPLE? THE ONLY ANSWER IS THAT TORRIJOS IS THE BRIDGE WHICH FIDEL CASTRO USES TO INTERFERE IN THE GUATEMALAN TERRITORY OF BELIZE."

5. SOMEWHAT SURPRISINGLY THE GOG HAS NOT ACCOMPANIED ITS ATTACK ON TORRIJOS WITH A RESTATEMENT OF GUATEMALAN NEUTRALITY ON THE CANAL QUESTION (REFTEL), A POSITION THE GOG ORIGINALLY TOOK FOLLOWING PANAMA'S VOTE FOR BELIZEAN INDEPENDENCE AT THE 1976 UNGA. INSTEAD THE GOG SEEMS TO BE REASSERTING ITS EARLIER POSITION OF SUPPORT FOR PANAMA. IN ITS OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF MAY 19 ANNOUNCING THE BREAKING OFF OF RELATIONS THE GOG SAID IT "CONSIDERS REASONABLE AND JUST, AS IT HAS STATED ON MANY OCCASIONS, THE HOPE OF THE PANAMANIAN

PEOPLE THAT THE CANAL TREATY BE REVISED SO THAT CONDITIONS MORE FAVORABLE TO PANAMA ARE ESTABLISHED." AND LAUGERUD, AFTER ATTACKING TORRIJOS, ADDED "WE WILL CONTINUE COOPERATING WITH THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE IN INTERNATIONAL FORA SO THAT JUSTICE IS RECEIVED BY THIS PEOPLE REGARDING THEIR CLAIMS ON THE CANAL".

6. COMMENT: LAUGERUD HAS MADE IT QUITE CLEAR THAT GUATEMALA'S GRIEVANCE IS WITH ONE MAN, OMAR TORRIJOS, AND THAT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WILL NOT BE REESTABLISHED BY HIS ADMINISTRATION WITH PANAMA AS LONG AS TORRIJOS IS IN POWER. HOWEVER, GUATEMALA HAS ALSO APPARENTLY DECIDED NOT TO ALLOW ITS GRIEVANCE AGAINST TORRIJOS TO INFLUENCE ITS POSITION ON THE CANAL. THE WHOLE INCIDENT ILLUSTRATES GUATEMALA'S EXTREME SENSITIVITY ON THE BELIZE ISSUE.
BOSTER

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Message Attributes

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Sent Date: 24-May-1977 12:00:00 am
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